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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Fifty-second session
Agenda item 9 (b)

FURTHER PROMOTION AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS, INCLUDING THE QUESTION OF THE PROGRAMME AND METHODS OF WORK OF THE COMMISSION

NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS FOR THE PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Note verbale dated 11 April 1996 from the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Cameroon to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the Chairman of the fifty-second session of the Commission on Human Rights

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Cameroon to the United Nations Office and the other international organizations at Geneva presents its compliments to the Chairman of the fifty-second session of the Commission on Human Rights and has the honour to submit* to him, for circulation as an official document of the Commission on Human Rights, the text of the "Yaoundé Declaration" adopted by the First African Conference of National Human Rights Institutions held at Yaoundé from 5 to 7 February 1996.

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* The annex is reproduced as received, in the original languages only.

ANNEX

REF. No. AFR.NI.HR CONF/YDE/96/DOC.07.ENG

FIRST AFRICAN CONFERENCE OF HUMAN RIGHTS NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

PREMIERE CONFERENCE AFRICAINE DES INSTITUTIONS NATIONALES DES DROITS DE L'HOMME

YAOUNDE - CAMEROON 5 TO 7 FEBRUARY 1996
YAOUNDE CAMEROUN 5 AU 7 FEVRIER 1996

THE YAOUNDE DECLARATION

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The Participants at the First African Conference of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, meeting in Yaounde, Cameroon, from 5 to 7 February 1996, at the invitation of Cameroon's National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms, under the auspices of the United Nations Centre for Human Rights:

Reaffirming their attachment to the principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights as well as in other relevant international instruments;

Bearing in mind the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action and the progress made by the international conferences of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights held in Paris in 1991, Tunis in 1993, and Manilla in 1995;

Recalling the resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly and of the Commission on Human Rights relating to National Institutions, in particular Resolution 48/134 of 20 December 1993 of the General Assembly relating to the status of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights;

Welcoming the growing interest shown worldwide in the creation and strengthening of independent and pluralistic National Institutions;

Reaffirming the important role that National Institutions must play both with regard to their responsibilities vis-a-vis governments and their responsibility to promote human rights and provide remedy when those rights are violated;

Stressing the indivisibility, universality and interdependence of human rights, pursuant to the spirit of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action;

Aware of the need for regional cooperation among National Institutions with a view to strengthening their activities and thus enabling them to benefit from their respective

experiences:

1. Stress the importance of creating and developing National Institutions in African countries, in conformity with the Paris Principles,

2. Encourage the widest possible dissemination of the basic principles of Human Rights in the local languages of African countries,

3. Hope that existing National Institutions comply with the above-mentioned Principles,

4. Recall the need to ensure the effective functioning of National Institutions by providing concrete guarantees of their independence and pluralism, especially at the legal and financial levels,

5. Consider it is important to strengthen existing National Institutions through concrete assistance and information exchanges between institutions at the regional and international levels,

6. Welcome the creation of new National Institutions to foster the rule of law and guarantee human rights in Africa,

7. Reaffirm the principle of improvement of National Institutions in an environment of democratic governance and seek to guarantee democracy through these institutions,

8. Encourage those African States that have not yet done so to created efficient, independent and pluralistic National Institutions,

9. Encourage all States, in particular African states, to take concrete measures to promote the exchange of information and experiences in a bid to stimulate the creation of National Institutions and strengthen existing ones,

10. Hope that the competence of National Institutions clearly reflects the universality and indivisibility of human rights based on sustainable development founded on the legal dignity of women and men,

11. Reaffirm, in accordance with the Vienna Programme of Action, the inalienable right to development as outlined in the Declaration on the right to development.

12. Believe that National Institutions have a primary role to play in human rights education, training and information dissemination at all levels;

13. Underscore the need for independent and equitable justice for all in a state governed by law and, in order to ensure genuine democracy, the importance of the fight against any form of impunity for those who violate human rights;

14. Recommend that African countries ratify treaties on Human Rights to which they have not yet acceded and respect their international commitments, with the help of National Institutions, where available, especially by:

- ensuring their national legislation complies with their international commitments;
- presenting reports required under the human rights treaties;

15. Call for regular consultation and exchange of information between all National Institutions, particularly those within the African region, as well as the development of a common programme of activities,

16. Recommend, to this end, that the United Nations Centre for Human Rights provide support, within the limits of its resources, to African National Human Rights Institutions in the preparation of a regional technical cooperation programme incorporated into national development plans,

17. Decide to create a Coordinating Committee of African National Institutions which will work in close collaboration with the International Coordination Committee and the United Nations Centre for Human Rights, particularly to:

- ensure the follow-up of the proceedings of the First Conference of African National Institutions held in Yaounde;

- facilitate the activities of National Institutions for mutual strengthening in the discharge of their respective missions;

- envisage other African meetings every two (2) years alternating with international conferences;

- negotiate a proper representative status on the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, and support the efforts of the International Coordinating Committee in the search for a status for National Institutions within the United Nations bodies dealing with human rights issues;

18. Request Cameroon's Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms to forward this Declaration through the International Coordination Committee to the next session of the Commission on Human Rights to hold in March 1996 in Geneva.